

# **Legal, Ethical and Clinical Implications of Doing Field Work with Youth Gang Members Who Engage in Serious Violence**

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**This research was financially supported by generous funding from the Youth Services Bureau (YSB) and Alice Carol McLurg. The author is grateful for the invaluable guidance, support, and reviews provided by following persons: Barbara Bole, Tullio Caputo, Michael Harrison, Florence Kellner, Katharine Kelly, DanParé, Robert Stebbins, Betsy Struthers, Mary Wehrle and Don Whyte.**

***Journal of Gang Research 8(4), 2001.***

## **Abstract**

This paper reports on dilemmas encountered when doing ethnographic research with youth gang members involved in serious crime. These acts often endanger the lives of others.<sup>1</sup> It is based upon a qualitative study of how 30 gang members aged 12 - 17 years accounted for their physical, sexual and emotional violence against girlfriends, gays, and racial minorities.<sup>2</sup> The main objective was to understand gang members' use of violence, from their perspective. The construction of masculinity was an ongoing process for these youth, negotiated and developed with limited resources at hand. The degree, level, and objects of their brutal violence was associated with differences in their adherence to patriarchal-authoritarian models of family and gender at home and in the gang. Most were victimized by severe child abuse and neglect, witnessed horrific beatings of their mothers, and lived on the street.

There were many dilemmas. First, victims of their violence had to be contacted to ensure safety and provide community resources. Many participants were on probation or in treatment facilities, and appropriate service providers had to be informed. Second, many were under the age of 16 years, and were being abused or neglected by family members. Under child welfare legislation in Canada, it is mandatory to report these incidents to child welfare authorities. Third, some were suicidal at the time of the interview, and required immediate mental health intervention. Youth who did not agree with these limitations to confidentiality were excluded from the study.

These types of dilemmas were successfully dealt with, to the benefit of participants and victims. Instead of avoiding this kind of field work, researchers must continue to explore these issues and get proper training prior to commencing research.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore how violent male youth gang members made sense of their behaviour, and how we, as outside observers, can better understand their world from their viewpoint. Through the exploration of the intentions, meanings and motives associated with this behaviour, I suggest that we can better comprehend adolescent gang violence in a social context. A multi-phase research design was used to examine the key concepts of familial patriarchal ideology, masculine identity, and gang affiliations. These concepts allowed for a better understanding of girlfriend abuse in the context of the existing research. The focus was on the development and impact of familial and gender ideologies upon the masculine identities of marginal male youth. Families and gangs were highlighted as two primary sites of ideological influence.<sup>3</sup>

This study was exploratory. Existing research does not examine, from the perspective of marginal youth, the role of gang membership in their perpetration of violence against girlfriends, gays, and visible minorities. The multi-method approach of this study addressed some of the shortcomings of existing quantitative studies on girlfriend abuse, which have primarily surveyed samples of university/college and high school students. Most of the existing work on girlfriend abuse is survey research. The collection of incidence and prevalence data has been the primary goal of this work<sup>4</sup>. Likewise, this study responds to a gap in research on how adolescent gang members who are gay, bisexual, or have serious questions about their sexual orientation explain their use violence against gays. Finally, little attention has been paid to how racial minority, youth gang members account for their violence against adolescents of the same racial origin.<sup>5</sup> This study also provides data on this topic.

The qualitative data from the thirty in-depth interviews consists of detailed, as close to verbatim as possible recordings made by me during and immediately following each interview. A systematic search for patterns, explanations and meanings in the narrative text provided the insights into the central research questions of this study. Participants did not allow me to audio-tape the interviews, likely because they were involved in serious criminal activities.<sup>6</sup>

This study addresses the question of adolescent gang violence against girls, gays, and minorities by taking a life-course approach<sup>7</sup> with participants. Studies have shown that early engagement in gangs and serious violence can lead to a criminal lifestyle in adulthood, institutionalization, or homicide.<sup>8</sup> It is relevant to programs and policy because information concerning motivation, justification and conditions relevant to collective youth violence can inform the content of programs designed to prevent violence and gang membership.

## **Methods**

A multi-method approach was used that involved elements of quantitative and qualitative research methods. A quantitative approach was used in the screening interviews to test preconceived concepts (see Appendix A). Existing scales were replicated in structured interviews. A qualitative approach was used in the in-depth interviews. Semi-structured questions were used to expand upon the preconceived concepts tested in the screening interviews (see Appendix B).

An initial data set was gathered through structured interviews with a purposive, non-representative sample of ninety male youth, aged 13-17 years. The research design employed with this screening sample is consistent with previous survey methods in the field<sup>9</sup>. A number of objectives were achieved in conducting this initial set of ninety interviews: the schedule of interview questions was developed and assessed; key concepts from the literature were tested with pre-constructed scales; and a sample of violent, adolescent male gang members for in-depth interviews was produced. The objectives of the thirty in-depth, follow-up interviews were to develop the key concepts identified in the screening interviews, and answer the two central research questions which emerged from this initial set of interviews: How do these boys make sense of their participation in their collective violence? What insights can be derived from using the key concepts to analyze the participants' behaviour in a broader social context?

### **In-Depth Interview Questions and Data Analysis**

The analytic method used for analyzing the in-depth interview data was based upon the techniques of ethnographic data analysis<sup>10</sup>. The in-depth interview data consists of transcripts regarding how these violent boys described their behaviour. This large volume of data provided rich accounts describing these boys' perspectives on their violent behaviour. This method gave the participants the opportunity to explore the meaning of their behaviour.

The dialogue in the in-depth interviews was free-flowing. I began by reviewing the completed screening interview, and then explored with the participants the in-depth interview questions. Although I attempted to maintain the sequence of these questions, this was not possible in many cases. In all interviews, however, the last five questions<sup>11</sup> were asked at the end of the interview. These five questions focused on defining the participants' behaviour as abusive and challenging them to accept responsibility for this violence. During each interview I noted as much as I could and immediately following the interview transcribed these notes into long form. The narratives were therefore recorded as close to verbatim as possible. This work took roughly two hours after the four-hour interview.

Although I attempted "to document the world from the point of view of the people studied",<sup>12</sup> the accounts during the in-depth interviews could not simply be taken at face value. I expected there to be inconsistencies. Given my clinical experience working with abusive male youth,<sup>13</sup> the existing literature on adult male abusers<sup>14</sup>, and the screening interviews, it was expected that these boys would rationalize, legitimize, and minimize their behaviour. To make sense of the participants' accounts, two issues were considered<sup>15</sup>: researcher-participant relationship, and the "truth-status"<sup>16</sup> of the participants' accounts. Both these factors are critical in considering the clinical implications of doing research with violent youth gang members.

### **Characteristics of In-Depth Interview Sample**

All of the thirty in-depth interview participants reported physically and/or sexually and emotionally abusive behaviour.<sup>17</sup> Twelve of the thirty participants were in a current relationship with a girlfriend. None of these participants was in counselling for abusive behaviour at the time of these interviews, nor had they ever

participated in such counselling.

I encountered numerous difficulties when attempting to find those participants who were not living at home. However, through word of mouth at youth drop-in centres, a shelter, and recreation club, I was able to eventually reconnect with these boys. An additional point of difficulty arose when I had to reject ten screening sample participants for in-depth interviews because they refused to consent to my contacting their girlfriends. The in-depth interviews were conducted at three main locations: the recreation club, youth shelter, and YSB program sites (drop-ins, treatment homes, employment office, young offender's unit). Audio taping was not used due to the sensitive nature of the research topic and requests by the screening interview participants that the interviews not be taped. Each interview took an average of four hours to complete.

All thirty youth were defined as economically and socially marginal. They all had poor relations with their families and received little or no financial support from them. Twenty-four were beaten by fathers and witnessed beatings of their mothers by fathers. Sixteen participants were living away from home: nine lived in a rooming house, shelter or on the street; five lived in a young offender or group home; two lived in a rented house or apartment. The fourteen boys who lived at home told me that they spent very little time there. Therefore, parental control was minimal with these youth. In addition, almost all were from working class neighbourhoods or government subsidized low-income housing projects. The mean school grade completed was 8.3, with a range of grades from 6 - 10. Many of these youth had dropped out of school, and the remaining youth reported that although they were still registered in school, they were either failing or frequently absent. The average age of these youth was 15.6 years, with a range of 14 - 17 years.

Children and youth who live in poverty face a number of risks related to physical and mental health, development, and education not normally associated with middle and upper income children and youth. Young people who have limited access to economic resources are much more likely to experience significant health and developmental problems, early school dropout, employability barriers, intervention by child welfare and youth justice systems, and homelessness<sup>18</sup>. Most of the boys who participated in this study struggling with many of these issues.

There were significant intra-group differences in the in-depth interview sample. Twenty-five identified as heterosexual, one as bisexual, three had serious questions about their sexual orientation, and one identified as gay. Six were ethno-racial minorities. Seventeen were hard-core criminal gang members; the remaining thirteen were members of anti-social criminal peer groups.<sup>19</sup> Almost all reported engaging in criminal activity and substance use on most days. Although all thirty of these boys were girlfriend abusers, they varied somewhat in the extent and forms of abuse inflicted, and their reasons for being abusive. Many reported participation in collective beatings on gays, ethno-racial minorities, and males they considered to be woman abusers.

### **Ethical and Legal Considerations**

One of the primary objectives in conducting this study was to increase the safety of abused girls. By learning more about how adolescent male gang members understood their violence, it was hoped that a contribution towards the elimination of woman abuse could be made. A number of immediate problems were encountered while planning the

research. How could the safety of abused girlfriends be enhanced without escalating the participants' abusive behaviour? How would disclosures of life-threatening criminal behaviour of the participants be treated? Could confidentiality and anonymity of the participants be ensured? How could the participants be challenged to accept responsibility for their abusive behaviour without introducing bias into the data? The way in which these questions were addressed was informed by Ontario's child welfare legislation and YSB policies and procedures.

Ethically, the only way I could heighten the safety of girlfriends without escalating abusive behaviour was to conduct in-depth interviews only with those boys who allowed me to have phone contact with their current or ex-girlfriends. My objectives in contacting participants' girlfriends included: supporting safety planning; explaining legal rights; offering referrals to local services for abused females; and explaining my research. I did not attempt to verify with these females the male participant's accounts of his abusive behaviour because I believed that this may have put them at further risk of assault<sup>20</sup>. In order to ensure that the participants fully understood the implications of this, a statement about contact was included on the interview consent form<sup>21</sup>. In addition, I decided that an ethical way for me to handle participants' disclosures of abusive behaviour and not contaminate the data was to confront them at the end of the interview and identify any abusive behaviour as such.

I was confident that my years of experience working with violent males provided me with the necessary clinical skills to accomplish this task. Existing literature on adult male abusers verifies the importance of holding men accountable for their abusive behaviour. Failure to label this behaviour as abusive and make men accountable can be interpreted by these men as tacit approval for their behaviour<sup>22</sup>.

YSB policy and procedures were relied upon for dealing with disclosures of engagement in life threatening criminal activity. I attempted to address the safety of girlfriends from threats and actual acts of life-threatening harm (for example death threats, physical and sexual assaults involving knives or guns, serious injuries resulting from physical and sexual assaults) by informing participants of my obligation to report any such acts or threats immediately to the police, probation officer, and/or child welfare authorities. YSB has a specific policy on this issue ("Client Disclosures of the Perpetration of Life-Threatening Criminal Activity"). This likely inhibited some participants from talking about violence perpetration, and some boys chose not to participate in the study because of this requirement. Of the thirty in-depth interview participants, eight disclosed perpetration of life-threatening physical and sexual assaults. In these cases, I contacted either the police, child welfare authorities, probation, school, or shelter staff to follow up the disclosure.

There were two other issues which precluded me from ensuring the complete anonymity and confidentiality of participants. These issues included disclosures of child maltreatment and suicidal behaviour. Ontario's child welfare legislation, the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA, 1984), stipulates that any professional having suspicion of maltreatment of a young person under the age of 16 years must report these suspicions immediately to the local child welfare agency. Fortunately, I had worked for a child welfare agency in the mid-1980's as a child protection social worker. I was therefore comfortable in assessing child maltreatment and had a thorough working knowledge of the legislation. Again, I included my legal reporting obligations regarding suspicions of

child maltreatment on the interview consent form. Given the fact that twenty-four of the in-depth interview participants reported having been beaten by father-figures, and many were under the age of 16 years, I had to report a significant number of these cases. In most of these cases, the participants told me that child welfare was already involved with their families. This was subsequently verified upon my reporting of the abuse allegations.

Finally, I was trained in assessing and intervening with suicidal behaviours. Prior to the start of the interviews, I assumed that some boys would already have at some point in their lives attempted suicide and/or currently be suicidal. Although I did not include any specific questions in the interviews regarding suicide, I addressed the limitations of confidentiality on this matter as well. I informed all boys that in the best interests of their own safety, I could not keep confidential the name of anyone who was at high risk of attempting suicide. I was clear that should this situation occur, I would take immediate action. I advised them that this might include calling an ambulance or advising parents. This was necessary in six cases.

### **Clinical Implications**

The in-depth interviews were “quasi-clinical” in nature. Quasi-clinical refers to the role I undertook at the end of each interview to challenge these young gang members to take responsibility for their abusive behaviour. There was a transfer from "facilitate the narrative" interviewer role to confrontative counsellor role<sup>23</sup> following the collection of the interview data. I also counselled some of these youth regarding suicide. To the best of my knowledge, this type of method has not been attempted before on a similar sample. Serious clinical dilemmas surfaced in the interview process.

I felt that I had an ethical and moral obligation to step outside of the traditional sociological interviewer role. To ensure safety of girlfriends and other victims, I felt I had no choice but to challenge participants to take responsibility for their violent behaviour. Only two youth became angry or threatening when confronted. Mike,<sup>24</sup> a burly 17 year old hard core gang member who had tattoos covering his arms, hands and neck, told me "So you're saying I beat and rape women?...Fuck you! I don't need this shit!". He then abruptly got up and left, slamming the door. This was the only interview in which I feared for my personal safety. Curt, also a 17 year-old member of a street gang, told me "Fuck you!" and left abruptly when I confronted him about his behaviour. Colin, a 16 year old member of a nazi gang who was homeless, told me "I don't need this shit from you" and got up in silence, shuffling his feet at the door for what seemed like an eternity to me. He took my business card and left the room, not making eye contact with me for quite some time. In this situation, I did not fear for my safety, although I was uncomfortable with Colin shuffling his feet in silence at the door, undecided as whether to stay or go. I did not know what to expect from him next in this situation.

Ten boys broke down and cried when describing the hopelessness and despair they felt about their sexual orientation and/or economic futures. They related these feelings to their perceived masculine deficits. I questioned these adolescents about suicide because they appeared to be distraught. Nine told me that they had attempted suicide previously, and I assessed three to be actively suicidal at the time of the interview. All three were provided with crisis counselling by YSB workers immediately following the interview. Only three of the thirty participants followed up on counselling

referrals to address their violent behaviour or substance abuse problems. In contrast, eight of the twelve current or ex-girlfriends pursued counselling with a YSB worker regarding their victimization.<sup>25</sup>

I have argued that these boys used "socially approved vocabularies"<sup>26</sup>, in which they justified their violence.<sup>27</sup> They consistently told me that my interpretation of their behaviour was wrong. They had a persona to maintain, and their accounts were characterized by boasting, machismo, inconsistencies and inaccuracies. It was a challenge to confront these boys to take responsibility for their violence, and acknowledge the harm they had done to victims. Many were very adept at denying, victim-blaming, minimizing, and outright lying. The "truth status"<sup>28</sup> of most accounts was low.<sup>29</sup> I had no way to "triangulate" the data,<sup>30</sup> because these adolescents did not give me permission to speak with or receive reports from child welfare authorities, youth justice professionals, or mental health service providers. Alternatively, these adolescents may not have been articulate enough to verbalize the inconsistencies in their accounts. Many were illiterate or only functionally literate. However, the fact that many broke down and cried led me to believe that they realized the incongruities in their accounts. These boys, like any other group of people, lived in socially constructed worlds.

The clinical implications of conducting this type of research are significant. When qualitative researchers explore the lives of high-risk, adolescent gang members, they can expect to find serious mental health problems and harmful behaviours. It should also be expected that many of these youth will attempt to control the interview and present themselves in the best possible light. For these reasons, attempts should be made to find alternative sources of data,<sup>31</sup> such as psychiatric or psychological assessments, reports from child welfare or other social agencies, and juvenile justice records. Of course, this can only be done with the written, informed consent of participants (and depending upon their age, their guardian), along with the approval of the institution or organization from which the information originates.

## **Conclusion**

These research dilemmas were successfully dealt with in the study. This was due to complex methodological procedures, which prioritized the needs of violence victims over those of the participants. Participants were also challenged to take responsibility for their violent actions, and get help for their complex needs. Although these procedures resulted in turning away many potential participants and likely restricted disclosure by some gang members (particularly regarding sexual assault), the end result enhanced the safety of both participants and victims. Instead of avoiding this kind of field work with young gang members, researchers must continue to explore these issues and get proper training prior to commencing a study. It is critical that the methodology for projects such as this be well planned, and that researchers are competent in dealing with violent gang members. If these issues are not attended to, serious harm can result to researchers, study participants, or victims.

# Appendix A

## Screening Interview Questions

### (N = 90)

First/Street Name:  
Interview Number:  
Date:  
Start/Finish Time:  
Visible Minority:

My name is Mark Totten. I am a Ph.D. student in Sociology. I also work for the Youth Services Bureau. I am doing research on problems in male-female dating relationships. Please answer each question as honestly as you can. All of your answers will be kept strictly confidential. However, if you tell me that any child under the age of 16 years is being abused or is currently at risk of being abused, I must report this to the C.A.S. by law. Also, if you are at risk of causing life-threatening harm to yourself or another person, I have to contact relevant professionals to ensure safety.

If you do not wish to answer a particular question, tell me and we will go on to the next question. The consent form states that you understand what you are being asked to do in this interview and that you understand that your answers will be kept confidential.

You will be paid \$10.00 for this interview.

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I hereby give my informed consent to be interviewed. I understand the nature of my involvement, and I have been assured that my answers will be kept strictly confidential. At no point during future analysis will I be identified by name. I further understand that the questionnaire and the information recorded from these questionnaires will be destroyed after the information has been used in the study for which it was intended. Any quotations from this interview will appear without anything which identifies who I am.

I am also aware that I have the right to refuse to answer any questions and that I may withdraw at any time. I agree that the researcher may also terminate this survey with me at any time.

Finally, I understand that there is no risk to me, my friends or my relatives stemming from my involvement in this study.

Please initial or make your mark \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

I want to begin with some general background questions.

1. How old are you?
2. Where are you currently living?
3. What is the highest school grade you have completed? (If still in school, indicate grade and type).
4. Did your parent(s) bring you up?  yes  no  
If yes, which parent?  
If no, who brought you up?  
Any other siblings/relatives in your home?
5. What was the main source of income in your family (i.e. welfare, alimony, disability, work)?  
Who provided most of the income in your family while you were growing up?
6. When you were growing up, was your \_\_\_\_\_ usually working?  
If no, probe for duration of unemployment, reasons why.  
 dependent poor  
If yes, was s/he self-employed or working for someone else?  
  
Probe: Self-employed: Did s/he usually have paid employees working for her/him, or did s/he usually work by her/himself?  
 capitalist  
 old middle class  
  
Probe: Someone else: Did s/he usually work as a manager or supervisor?  
 new middle class  
 working class
7. What is the highest level of school completed by your parent(s)/person(s) who brought you up?
8. What would the total income/earnings (before taxes) of your \_\_\_\_\_ be for last year?
9. If you support yourself, what was your total income/earnings (before taxes) for last year?
10. What kind of place (i.e. residence) did you grow up in (i.e. apartment, public housing, owned home)?
11. Are you straight/gay/bisexual?

The next questions are about the things you do with your friends and relatives, and what they think about females.

12. Of all your friends, who do you spend more time with:  
 female friends  
 male friends  
 mixed group of friends  
Probe: For how much time each week?
13. Of all your relatives, who do you spend more time with:  
 female relatives  
 male relatives  
 male and female relatives together  
Probe: For how much time each week?

14. Describe for me three things which you do with your male friends that take up most of this time:
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
15. Describe for me three things which you do with your male relatives that take up most of this time.
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
16. As far as you know, how many of your male friends (all, most, a few, none) have forced sex on girls/women?  
Probe: Relation to victim, frequency, description of incident(s).
17. As far as you know, how many of your male relatives (all, most, a few, none) have forced sex on girls/women?
18. As far as you know, how many of your male friends (all, most, a few, none) have used physical force on girls/women?  
Probe: Relation to victim, frequency, description of incident(s).
19. As far as you know, how many of your male relatives (all, most, a few, none) have used physical force on girls/woman?
20. As far as you know, how many of your male friends (all, most, a few, none) have insulted, put down or threatened girls/women?  
Probe: Relation to victim, frequency, description of incident(s)
21. As far as you know, how many of your male relatives (all, most, a few, none) have insulted, put down or threatened girls/women?
22. How many of your male friends (all, most, a few, none) have ever told you that it is all right for a male to use physical force against girls/women in certain situations?  
Probe: Against which girls/women, what kinds of situations
23. How many of your male relatives (all, most, a few, none) have ever told you that it is all right for a male to use physical force against girls/women in certain situations?  
Probe: Against which girls/women, what kinds of situations
24. How many of your male friends (all, most, a few, none) have ever told you that girls/women should have sex with you when you want?  
Probe:
25. How many of your male relatives (all, most, a few, none) have ever told you that girls/women should have sex with you when you want?  
Probe:
26. How many of your male friends (all, most, a few, none) have ever told you that if a male spends money on a date, she should have sex with him in return?  
Probe:
27. How many of your male relatives (all, most, a few, none) have ever told you that if a male spends money on a date, she should have sex with him in return?  
Probe:
28. How many of your male friends (all, most, a few, none) have ever told you that it is all right for a

- guy to insult/put down girls/women in certain situations?  
Probe: Which girls/women, what situations
29. How many of your male relatives (all, most, a few, none) have ever told you that it is all right for a guy to insult/put down girls/women in certain situations?  
Probe: Which girls/women; what situations
30. How much pressure, if any, have male friends placed on you to have sex with females?
31. How much pressure, if any, have male relatives placed on you to have sex with females?
32. Some people think it is all right for a male to slap a female in certain situations. Other people think it is not all right. For each of the following situations, please tell me if your male friends, female friends, male relatives, and female relatives would strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree with a male slapping a female if ....  
Male F. Fem. F. Male R. Fem.R.
- a) she won't do what he tells her to do  
b) she insults him when they are alone  
c) she insults him in public  
d) she gets drunk during an evening out together  
e) she is sobbing hysterically  
f) she won't have sex with him  
g) he learns that she is dating another man  
h) she hits him first when they are having an argument.
33. For each of the following situations, please tell me if you would strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree with a male slapping his girlfriend if
- a) she won't do what he tells her to do  
b) she insults him when they are home alone  
c) she insults him in public  
d) she comes home drunk  
e) she is sobbing hysterically  
f) she won't have sex with him  
g) he learns that she is dating another male  
h) she hits him first when they are having an argument
34. For each of the following statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.
- a) A male and his wife/girlfriend should have equal say in deciding how to spend the family income  
b) A male and his wife/girlfriend should share the household chores if they are both working outside the home  
c) A male has the right to decide whether or not his wife/girlfriend should go out in the evening with her friends  
d) A male has the right to decide whether or not his wife/girlfriend should work outside the home  
e) Sometimes it is important for a male to show his wife/girlfriend that he is the head of the house  
f) Any woman who is raped is at least partly to blame  
g) A male has the right to have sex with his wife/girlfriend when he wants, even though she may not want to  
h) If a male hits his wife/girlfriend, it is because he's lost his temper and gone out of control
35. Next, I would like you to give me 10 quick answers to the question, "What is the ideal man?"

36. Now I am going to read you some more statements. Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.
- a. A man is never justified in hitting his wife.  
1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. disagree 4. strongly disagree
  - b. Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to many women.  
4. strongly agree 3. agree 2. disagree 1. strongly disagree
  - c. Many times a woman will pretend she doesn't want to have sex because she doesn't want to seem loose, but she is really hoping the man will just take over.  
4. strongly agree 3. agree 2. disagree 1. strongly disagree
  - d. A wife should move out of the house if her husband hits her.  
1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. disagree 4. strongly disagree
  - e. Sometimes the only way a man can get a cold woman turned on is to use some force.  
4. strongly agree 3. agree 2. disagree 1. strongly disagree
  - f. Most women dislike men who try to be too physical with them.  
1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. disagree 4. strongly disagree
  - g. Most men like a woman to put up a struggle before agreeing to have sex.  
4. strongly agree 3. agree 2. disagree 1. strongly disagree
  - h. When a woman says no to sex, it doesn't mean the man should give up.  
4. strongly agree 3. agree 2. disagree 1. strongly disagree
  - i. Some women like to be hit, they seem to think it means you care for them.  
4. strongly agree 3. agree 2. disagree 1. strongly disagree
  - j. The woman should be in control during a sexual encounter.  
1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. disagree 4. strongly disagree
37. Have you ever dated a girl/woman?
38. The next questions are about your sexual experiences with girlfriends.  
Probe: Frequency, context. If no assaults, probe why.
- a) Have you engaged in sex play (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse) with a female when she didn't want to by overwhelming her with continual arguments and pressure?
  - b) Have you engaged in sex play (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse) with a female when she didn't want to by threatening or using some degree of physical force (twisting her arm, holding her down, etc.)?
  - c) Have you attempted sexual intercourse (getting on top of her, attempting to insert penis) with a female when she didn't want it by threatening or using some degree of physical force (twisting her arm, holding her down, etc.) but intercourse did not occur?
  - d) Have you attempted sexual intercourse with a female (getting on top of her, attempting to insert penis) when she didn't want it because she was drunk or high, but intercourse did not occur?
  - e) Have you engaged in sexual intercourse with a female when she didn't want to by overwhelming her with continual arguments or pressure?
  - f) Have you engaged in sexual intercourse with a female when she didn't want to because she was

drunk or high?

- g) Have you engaged in sexual intercourse with a female when she didn't want to by threatening or using some degree of physical force (twisting her arm, holding her down, etc.)
  - h) Have you engaged in sex acts (anal or oral intercourse or penetration by objects other than the penis) with a female when she didn't want to by threatening or using some degree of physical force (twisting her arm, holding her down, etc.)?
39. Please tell me how many times, if any, you have done the following things to your girlfriends. (Frequency:)
- a) Insulted or swore at her
  - b) Put her down in front of friends or family
  - c) Accused her of having affairs or flirting with other men
  - d) Did or said something to spite her
  - e) Threatened to hit or throw something at her
  - f) Threw, smashed or kicked something
  - g) Threw something at her
  - h) Pushed, grabbed or shoved her
  - i) Slapped her
  - j) Kicked, bit, or hit her with your fist
  - k) Hit or tried to hit her with your fist
  - l) Beat her up
  - m) Choked her
  - n) Threatened her with a knife or a gun
  - o) Used a knife or gun on her

40. I really appreciate the time you have taken to complete this interview. I'd like to assure you that everything you have told me will remain strictly confidential. I realize that the topics covered in this interview are sensitive and that many males don't want to talk about these issues. I'm also a bit worried that I haven't asked the right questions. Have you had any other experiences in which you physically, sexually, or emotionally harmed any girlfriends that you would like to talk about?

Is there anything that came up in this interview for which you would like counselling/support? If yes, provide relevant referral information.

# **Appendix B**

## **In-depth Interview Questions**

### **(N = 30)**

First/Street Name:  
Interview Number:  
Date:  
Start/Finish Time:

My name is Mark Totten. I am a Ph.D. student in sociology. I also work for the Youth Services Bureau. I am doing research on problems in male-female dating relationships. You have agreed to let me interview you as a follow-up to the interview we did about one year ago. You understand that I will be contacting your (ex) girlfriend to explain what I am doing, and to make sure that she is safe. Also, if you are at risk of causing life-threatening harm to yourself or another person, I have to contact relevant professionals to ensure safety.

Please answer each question as honestly as you can. All of your answers will be kept strictly confidential. However, if you tell me that any child under the age of 16 years is being abused or is currently at risk of being abused, I must report this to the C.A.S. by law.

If you do not wish to answer a particular question, tell me and we will go on to the next question. The consent form states that you understand what you are being asked to do in this interview and that you understand that your answers will be kept confidential.

#### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

I hereby give my informed consent to be interviewed. I understand the nature of my involvement, and I have been assured that my answers will be kept strictly confidential. At no point during future analysis will I be identified by name. I further understand that the questionnaire and the information recorded from these questionnaires will be destroyed after the information has been used in the study for which it was intended. Any quotations from this interview will appear without anything which identifies who I am.

I am also aware that I have the right to refuse to answer any questions and that I may withdraw at any time. I agree that the researcher may also terminate this survey with me at any time.

Finally, I understand that there is no risk to me, my friends or my relatives stemming from my involvement in this study.

Please initial or make your mark \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

Begin with completed screening interview, probing at identified questions and inserting following questions.

Following # 11:

What do you think about your family?

- How do you feel about the way they treat you?
- Was/Is there any abuse between your parents? What type? How often?
- How did/do you experience any abuse from your parents?
- How have your parents influenced you?
- What kinds of beliefs or values does your family have around male and female roles?

Following # 35:

What does it mean to you ... to be male?

Do you think this has anything to do with the way you get along with

- females
- gays
- other guys

Following # 38:

I'd like to ask you some questions about your relationships with girlfriends over the past year.

- Have you had a sexual relationship?

**If yes:** can you tell me about it?

**If no:** go to number 26.

**Probe:** To assess whether sex was consensual or forced:

- Was verbal pressure used to persuade female to have sex?
- Were verbal threats used to force female to have sex?
- Was physical force used to have sex?
- Were drugs and/or alcohol used to overcome resistance?

After # 39:

Please tell me how many times, if any, you have done any of these same things to your girlfriends during the past year.

- Insulted or swore at her
- Put her down in front of friends or family
- Accused her of screwing around
- Did or said something to get back at her
- Threatened to hit or throw something at her
- Threw, smashed or kicked something
- Threw something at her
- Pushed, grabbed or shoved her
- Slapped her
- Kicked, bit, or hit her with your fist
- Hit or tried to hit her with your fist
- Beat her up
- Choked her
- Threatened her with a knife or a gun
- Used a knife or gun on her

After # 40:

I'm a bit worried that I haven't asked the right questions. Have you had any other experiences in which you physically, sexually, or emotionally harmed a girlfriend during the past year?

41. I'd like to find out about the emotions and feelings you have/had about the abuse. How does/did it feel to be abusive in a relationship? What kinds of emotions did/do you experience at the time of

the abusive incident(s)? Immediately after?

42. How do you feel about the abuse now?
43. What do you think led you to be abusive?  
Do you think that the way you see yourself as being a guy has anything to do with you being abusive?
44. What helped/would help you to stop being abusive?
45. What kinds of things do you think could have prevented you from being abusive?

Provide relevant referral info.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Kelly and Totten, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Totten, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Makepeace, 1986; Koss et al., 1987; Stets and Henderson, 1991; White and Koss, 1991; DeKeseredy and Kelly, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Some studies have explored adolescent group members' engagement in gay bashing and racially motivated violence. To the best of my knowledge, none have attempted to address the issues I raise here. For example, see: Hagedorn, 1993; Harry, 1992; Hill and Santiago, 1992; Weissman, 1992; Beirne and

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Messerschmidt, 1991; Comstock, 1991; Connell, 1991; Katz, 1988; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1983, 1985; Messerschmidt, 1986, 1993; Chambliss, 1973; Willis, 1977.

<sup>6</sup> It is easier to audio-tape interviews with youth convicted of serious crimes of violence, who are doing time in juvenile or adult correctional facilities (see Kelly and Totten, 2001). The boys in this current study said it was too risky for me to record their conversations on violence. Most were in the community at the time of the interviews.

<sup>7</sup> See Kelly and Totten, 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid; Totten, 2001c; Heide, 1999.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Russell, 1990 and Scully, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> See Glaser and Straus, 1967.

<sup>11</sup> Questions # 41- 45, Appendix B.

<sup>12</sup> Hammersley, 1992:165

<sup>13</sup> At the time, I had over 10 years experience working with violent adolescents in clinical settings.

<sup>14</sup> For example, see Scully, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> Ptacek, 1988, conducted in-depth interviews with a small sample (18) of adult woman abusers who were in a group treatment program for male batterers. He looked at similar issues when analyzing the accounts of his participants.

<sup>16</sup> Silverman, 1993.

<sup>17</sup> See Totten, 2000 for definitions.

<sup>18</sup> For example, see Offord, Boyle and Racine, 1990; Wharf, 1993; DeMontigny, 1995; Swift, 1995; Danzig, 1996; Gonzales-Ramos, 1996; Wallace, Wallace and Andrews, 1997.

<sup>19</sup> A strict definition of hard-core criminal youth gang was used. This excluded some participants who claimed to be gang members, but were classified by me instead as anti-social, criminal peer group members. See Totten, 2000 for definitions and more discussion on this issue.

<sup>20</sup> See Adams, 1988, and Totten, Manton and Baker, 1995, for further discussion related to this issue.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>22</sup> For example, see Ptacek, 1988.

<sup>23</sup> Ptacek, 1988.

<sup>24</sup> Pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity.

<sup>25</sup> Eighteen of the participants did not have a girlfriend, or an ex-girlfriend I was able to contact at the time of the in-depth interviews.

<sup>26</sup> Scott and Lyman, 1968:46,52.

<sup>27</sup> Totten, 2000.

<sup>28</sup> Silverman, 1993.

<sup>29</sup> Totten, 2000; See Totten and Kelly, 2001a, for further discussion on this issue with a sample juveniles convicted of homicide.

<sup>30</sup> See Kelly and Totten, 2001b.

<sup>31</sup> i.e., Triangulation.